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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews several articles with language-based teacher empowerment themes, discussing empowerment in relation to secondary school language teaching (particularly less commonly taught language teaching) and teacher development. The paper extrapolates from the ideas proposed that second language teachers can be empowered, or at least set on the road to empowerment, in their preservice teaching experiences. After defining empowerment, the paper looks at important keys to empowerment, which include: interaction with colleagues, families, and friends; the ability to change curriculum when students' needs are not being met; exposure to authentic classroom situations; personality traits; and morale and external influences. The paper also examines impediments to empowerment, which include: negative teacher attitudes; lack of time for interaction and discussion; lack of adequate teacher development opportunities; lack of opportunity for interaction; and political and bureaucratic impediments. Suggestions for strengthening the confidence of future language teachers include: using realistic case studies dealing with the dynamics of teacher-teacher and teacher-student interactions; providing students with an understanding of the social and political dynamics of school systems; sending the preservice teacher to another country where a second language is spoken; and taking a mandatory course in Computer Assisted Language Learning. (Contains 15 references.) (SM)

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Developing A Voice: Teacher Empowerment and Second Language Teacher Education

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Developing a Voice: Teacher Empowerment and Second Language Teacher Education

Since the mid-1980's empowerment has been an issue in teacher development and in school reform in the United States. The catch phrase in precollege institutions for the past fifteen years has been "child empowerment is an outcome of teacher empowerment" (Yonemura, 1986, p. 475). As teachers seek to professionalize their vocation, the call for empowerment becomes even more prominent, as teachers want their voices to be heard (Mertens and Yarger, 1988, p. 35). Others use the term "empowerment" in its more globally political sense of granting a political voice to disenfranchised and under represented groups, such as women, Spanish-speakers, and African-Americans (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 300). It is important to note, however, that while much has been written of the need for teacher empowerment, little has been written about the empowerment of second language teachers.

A second language teacher should feel empowered by his or her unique knowledge base. Second language teachers have a unique understanding not only of the language and linguistic structure of the language they teach; they have a deep understanding of another culture. The second language teacher possesses skills that enable him or her to not only memorize and utilize vast amounts of vocabulary and grammar, but also the outstanding reasoning skills needed to create an understanding of a culture that is not native to his or her students. Furthermore, the second language teacher has the unique ability to transfer his or her own, seemingly "natural" control of these overwhelming subjects to students for whom the grammar and vocabulary is

overwhelmingly alien. Why, then, do such talented teachers feel unempowered? Why can't precollege second language teachers recognize and appreciate their own talents?

The need for empowerment in secondary school language teachers is particularly desperate in the case of secondary school teachers of less commonly taught languages (LCTLs), such as Russian, Japanese, and Chinese. The dire situation of some of the LCTLs (Russian for example) due to low enrollments has led to threats to the survival of entire programs, and therefore to the employment of the teachers who teach these languages. These teachers work in extreme isolation and lack the numbers needed for their voices to be heard beyond their school systems. They need to feel that they can do something about their situation. They need to feel empowered.

This paper will review several articles with language-based (literacy and writing) teacher empowerment themes, discuss empowerment as it applies to secondary school language teaching (focusing heavily on secondary school less commonly taught language teaching) and teacher development, and extrapolate from the ideas a proposal that second language teachers can be empowered or at least set on the road to empowerment in their preservice teaching experiences.

Defining Empowerment

"Empowerment", for all its discussion, is still largely an elusive concept. There is no set definition of empowerment, but five authors in particular have attempted to make this abstract idea more concrete. It is interesting to note that each of the authors takes uniquely different approaches to their definitions.

Mary Alice Barksdale-Ladd, working both alone (1994) and with Karen Thomas (1996) focuses on empowerment as an issue of "confidence in personal knowledge and in the ability to make decisions and take actions based on personal knowledge" (Barksdale-Ladd and Thomas, 1996, p. 161). Stressing that "empowerment" is a process, not a product, she emphasizes that teachers recognize critical points in their careers when change is crucial. This self-knowledge and self-understanding leads to actively seeking means of improving classroom situations, often through participation in opportunities offered in professional development, shared decision making, and a sense of ownership of curriculum.

In contrast to Barksdale-Ladd's definition is that of Mahmoud Suleiman (1998). Suleiman sees a need for "empowering teachers", rather than "empowered teachers"; in fact he prefers to use the term "responsible teaching." He derives an operational definition of responsible teaching from knowledge of classical Greek philosophy and of effective teaching methods. Dividing teaching into three ethical dimensions, Suleiman discusses the logos of teaching (the need for teachers to be "intellectually appealing given their exemplar of knowledge about what they teach" (p.3)), the pathos of teaching (teachers must be affective, creating "needed intellectual and emotional tension in students" (p. 3)), and the ethos of teaching (professional ethics and the teacher as a role model for his or her students). In addition, Suleiman sees "responsible teaching" as following such guidelines as providing multiple learning opportunities and a challenging but not threatening environment, promoting life-long learning, maintaining high expectations and standards, posing more questions and providing fewer answers, leading to teach and teaching to lead, and initiating research and taking action for constant

academic renewal. Suleiman sees his guidelines as mere examples of exemplary teaching -- he does not discuss how teachers should meet these guidelines or become "responsible teachers".

Sally Mertens and Sam J. Yarger (1988) view empowerment as vital to the professionalization of teaching. They feel teaching as a profession will be strengthened when it provides structures so that teachers will be empowered, "that is, have the basic authority and power to power to practice their teaching based upon professional knowledge" (p. 35) and are involved in the decision-making practice that will affect the conduct of their professional practice. In this way, teacher empowerment will lead to improving classroom instruction. They are quick to note that "Hypothetically professional knowledge could be transmitted ad infinitum, but there is no defensible purpose if the system does not provide them the authority and power to function in accordance with their professional understandings" (p. 35). Mertens and Yarger also point out that very rarely are teachers invited to take part in the decisions that will affect their practice in their school. They are often accused of not having developed a "professional culture", but are arguably not allowed to have any influence on ideas, such as the selection of new colleagues, that will directly affect them. In essence, their definition is political, but focuses on the balance of politics in the school, and not of the nation.

Elizabeth Ellsworth takes a more global view of empowerment in her 1989 article, "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering?". Ellsworth looks at empowerment through the eyes of a critical pedagogue, and feels that critical pedagogy is embracing ideas about empowerment that are "not only unhelpful, but actually exacerbated the very

conditions we were trying to work against....[we] reproduce[d] relations of domination in our classroom"(p. 298) The teacher educator continues, noting that "student empowerment and dialogue give the illusion of equality while in fact leaving the authoritarian nature of the teacher/student relationship intact" (p. 306)

To Ellsworth, the issue should be less "what is empowerment?" than "what is empowerment for?" She notes that there are several answers to the latter question, "for 'human betterment', for expanding the 'range of possible social identities people may become', and 'making one's self present as part of a moral and political project that links production of meaning to the possibility for human agency, democratic community, and transformative social action.'" Realizing that these are all purposes for empowerment, she feels that empowerment means "'a capacity to act effectively' in a way that fails to challenge nay identifiable social or political position, institution or group...[this] testifies to the failure of critical educators to come to terms with the essentially paternalistic project of traditional education." (p. 307). Like Suleiman, she ultimately rejects the term "empowered teacher", in this case, for "emancipatory authority"-- a teacher who has been given authority by his or her students due to his or her expanded knowledge base alone.

Margaret Yonemura (1986) provides a Deweyan view of empowerment. To Yonemura, empowerment is the result of cultivating personal character traits. In her experience with teaching student teachers, she tried to help the students

> ...become familiar with the role teachers play without being absorbed by that role...remain themselves even as they learn to draw on new inner resources... to hold on to their own voices rather than adopt

> the "teacher" voice to which many of us are addicted....become generators of knowledge as well as recipients of the knowledge of the profession.... (p. 475)

To this means, she focused on letting student teachers explore their own knowledge bases, and provided them with realistic experiences that enabled them to put their own knowledge to good use. Like Suleiman, Yonemura defines an "empowered teacher" as what he or she is able to do,

> ...invent curricula which will permit them to share with children their own experiences and personal meanings....work together [collaboratively] as often as possible to support a belief that all of us generate knowledge....study and work with children to see them as active, knowledgeable, and fully human....[realize] that the settings of school and classroom are not "inescapable reality" but are transformable.... (p. 475)

Yonemura believes that as teachers can be taught to be reflective in their early, preservice years, and can be provided with reasonably realistic teaching experiences thanks to practicum situations or student teaching opportunities, they can be empowered before starting their actual inservice teaching.

Keys to empowerment

While the definitions of empowerment vary, the authors have a certain image in mind when they describe what an empowered teacher looks like. Themes arise that reflect the goals the authors have in mind when they discuss how to empower teachers.

Interaction

Empowered teachers, Barksdale-Ladd (1996) notes, often do not realize that they are empowered, but do exhibit common qualities. The teachers that Barksdale-Ladd studied all cited the availability of support in their lives, both professionally and personally. Interactions with different people (especially family members and close friends and colleagues) affected the development of their empowerment. Suleiman reinforces this idea, noting that interactions of teachers inspire the "creative production of knowledge [as opposed to the] passive consumption of knowledge" (Suleiman, 1998, p. 4). Yonemura believes that identifying all personal resources, including friends, leads to confidence building. Mertens and Yarger summarize the need for interaction among teachers as providing a necessary source of validation; teachers have to feel what they are doing is worthwhile and value the feedback of their colleagues to reinforce this.

Attempts to empower teachers are largely built around allowing teachers to work together. Cochran and DeChesere (1995) report on their Petaluma, California school district's cognitive coaching method of empowerment, which is based on close mentoring relationships. The Petaluma model focuses on creating a climate of trust within the school district, supported by the community that allows for a sense of "ownership" of teaching on behalf of the educators in the district.

Mertens and Yarger see Teacher Centers as one of the keys to empowerment. Teachers Centers provide staff development for teachers in a wide variety of school situations. What makes them so unique is that these Teacher Centers are run by teachers for teachers. Teachers are acknowledged as having talents and/or ideas to share, and are given the opportunity to demonstrate their talents for the good of other teachers.

Vivian Troen and Katherine Boles (1988) describing a teacher empowerment project between their elementary school and Wheelock College note that time was arranged to allow teachers who work together on various aspects of the project. Mary Warner (1997) describes a preservice program designed to empower writing teachers that featured pairing the preservice teachers with college freshman composition students. Nancy Fichtman Dana (1995), describing the suppression of teachers' voices, notes that the teachers being studies saw the opportunity to interact with other colleagues as vital to enhancing their feelings of empowerment.

Barksdale-Ladd (1996) also notes that teacher interaction provides teachers with the "courage" to make changes in their classroom following attendance at workshops and seminars. She also feels that it is critical for the teacher to interact positively with his or her administrators; their positive feedback encourages further growth.

Teacher interaction is invaluable to teacher empowerment. It encourages teachers to discuss their teaching dilemmas. It leads to expansions of creativity and resourcefulness. Most importantly, however, it provides teachers with validation; the feeling that the ideas they are trying to implement in their classrooms are worthwhile.

Curriculum Decisions

Empowered teachers do not hesitate to change curriculum when their students' needs are not being met by the pre-established order. Barksdale-Ladd noted, in her study of eight empowered elementary school teachers (1996), that six considered their primary focus to be the needs of their student and to satisfy those needs, varied their approaches to teaching, supplemented their materials with self-generated work, and made subtle

adaptations to the established curriculum (presenting material out of the established order, for example).

Suleiman also describes a need for "responsible teachers" to use a wide variety of techniques and resources in their pedagogy. He advocates integrating diversity into all aspects of learning. He also focuses on bridging the gap between practice and theory and vice versa. "Responsible teachers" embrace "risk-taking and risk making" (p. 5) to encourage active learning in their students.

Mertens and Yarger also feel that school-based management, in which decisions for a school are made on the local level, and not through a central office with no connection to the school's day to day workings, is an option involving making curricular decisions that leads to the empowerment of teachers.

Make it real...

Several authors note that it is very important in the empowerment of teachers at the preservice level to expose the teachers in training to authentic classroom situations. Margaret Yonemura (1988) notes the importance of understanding the children that the preservice teacher will work with, believing "When we come to see children as knowledgeable, hard at work making meanings, and fully human, we can see ourselves in a new and revealing light" (p. 478). She feels that in preservice classes, the students can be introduced to constructivist theory, but for real enlightenment, the preservice teachers must be exposed to what an inservice teacher actually goes through in a day's work. Yonemura advocates authentic experiences in preservice training, and to that end she stresses the importance of linking student teachers with cooperating teachers who will

support the ideas she embraces in her teacher education classes and expose their student teachers to all facets of daily teaching.

Mary Warner reinforces Yonemura's idea, noting that her preservice writing teachers needed the opportunity to interact with young writers in order to truly understand what kinds of problems they would encounter as teachers of writing. In both of these cases, there is a sense of providing "preventive medicine" designed to build confidence; if the student teachers recognize different problematic situations that they can encounter, they will be more confident in how they handle these situations as inservice teachers, and this confidence will encourage their feelings of empowerment.

Personality influence

Since it could be argued that being empowered is as much as state of mind as a condition to be reached, personality is an important feature in considering the characteristics of an empowered teacher. One of the teachers in Barksdale-Ladd's 1994 survey of the influence of the structure of Professional Development Schools (PDSs) on teacher empowerment felt that "her development of empowerment was limited because of her personality and the lack of security of her teaching position" (p. 108).

Yonemura's teacher education classes emphasize the internal strengths the preservice teachers possess, and therefore, cultivate an appreciation of positive personality traits. Yonemura firmly believes that a teacher must be able to "draw on [him or her]self"; that preservice teachers have "within themselves resources for contributing to the education program" (p. 476). Stressing the need for a low student-to-faculty ratio to enable the students to feel they can reveal their own deeply held interests and knowledge, she builds her program around three different questions: "What do I [the

preservice teacher] know?", "What do people like me, my peers, know?", and "What do children know?". Focusing on reflection and confidence building, collaborative learning, and child development, Yonemura emphasizes the need for teachers to realize that they do hold the power within classrooms, and works with cooperating teachers and student teacher to recognize their empowerment.

Morale and external influences

Empowerment, in Mertens' and Yarger's view, develops out of positive morale derived from confidence and pride in one's competence" (Mertens and Yarger, 1988, p. 35). Morale deals with the ability "to do one's work in a manner consistent with one's standards and values" (p. 35). Teachers exercise the most authority, however, when they are in their classrooms; "in reality, classroom teachers are typically accorded, especially by policy makers and administrators, about the same level of professional respect as that granted unskilled laborers" (p. 35).

Troen and Boles describe a school in which teachers are provided with uniquely different, empowering roles by the administration. Teachers work together in teams thanks to the inclusion in their schedules of three joint planning sessions each week. In addition, they are allowed Alternative Professional Teaching Time, in which they can fulfill hybrid teacher roles, such as Teacher/Researcher (allowing the teacher to conduct action research in his or her class), Teacher/Trainer (allowing the teacher to be directly responsible for the supervision and training of student teachers from Wheelock College) and Teacher/Curriculum Writer (allowing the teacher to be responsible for designing, piloting, and implementing new curricula, which is then evaluated by fellow teachers). This school's situation provides an example of inservice teacher empowerment.

Interviewing five teachers at a PDS in 1994, Barksdale-Ladd notes that principals can limit the development of empowerment since they "require compliance in many ways" (Barksdale-Ladd, 1994, p. 108). In the context of school culture, many of the teachers noted that the development of their own materials made them feel empowered.

Impediments to Empowerment

Examining the keys to empowerment, one would wonder why empowerment is such an apparently elusive characteristic. In modern teacher education classes, preservice teachers are encouraged to work cooperatively. Courses are actually offered on managing teacher organizations, bring teachers together to work collaboratively. The current emphasis on student-centered instruction in teacher education classes not only encourages but prepares future teachers to alter their curriculum to benefit their students' needs. Simulations and case studies, in addition to practica and student teaching opportunities, are common ways of exposing future teachers to real life situations they can encounter as teachers. Reflective exercises, such as narrative writing, are used regularly in schools of education to encourage the type of appreciation of personal strengths that are so important to empowering teachers. Even issues of morale and school climate are addressed in administration and supervision classes. By rights, every teacher who enrolls in, and successfully completes a teacher education program, should feel empowered.

Unfortunately, something is missing. In Barksdale-Ladd's 1996 study of eight elementary school reading teachers, the number in the sample was not limited to eight for the sake of convenience. Barksdale-Ladd relied on Title 1 teachers in a large school district to make the decision of who they felt was empowered. The fact that they only

found eight indicates that something is wrong; if all teachers receive the same basic training, why do some feel empowered and others do not? Why are so few teachers perceived as being empowered?

Disempowering teacher attitudes

In Nancy Fichtman Dana's study, her two subjects find strength in participating in the study, but they face real-world obstacles that would effectively silence any teacher's voice, and crush any development of empowerment.

Dana's study focuses on two teachers' attempts to gain a voice in the running of their school. The two teachers, recognizing the failure of top-down approaches to educational reform, in which teachers' voices are largely omitted, attempt to change the culture of their school to encourage an atmosphere of collegiality and caring. The first teacher Dana studies, "Helen", a veteran teacher with 23 years experience, begins with a very optimistic, positive feeling. She volunteers to be the facilitator of the school's Improvement team, and starts voicing her enthusiasm for projects and new classroom practices at faculty meetings. Her voice is silenced by a comment made by a fellow teacher questioning if the only reason "Helen" is becoming so vocal is that she wants to gain political power. Faced with this snide criticism, she abandons her efforts, her voice silenced by her peers.

The other teacher, "Peg" , another veteran teacher, with 16 years experience, feels that if the School Improvement Team is developed properly, it will be "a potential place for teacher empowerment". In journal entries, "Peg" indicates that a large source of tension in the school is due to the presence of a relatively small group of very loud teachers, "The voices of a few 'complainers' overpowered the voices of empowered

teachers." These teachers viewed their colleagues' empowerment as "running the school".

In the case of these two teachers, then, there is a social current running through the school that is against their empowerment. From personal experience teaching in secondary schools in New England, I can attest to the fact that there are always some teachers, often with many years experience, who also have very negative attitudes about change. Whether this is due to their age or being "burnt out" is irrelevant; they are often respected members of the faculty, on tenure, who have taught several generations of students and thus have the support of many community members. While they may be only a small percentage of the faculty, they are loud and well supported and can easily silence an eager teacher.

Lack of time

In Dana's study, time is also an issue. The school principal, who superficially supported the efforts of the teachers, and allowed them time for their discussion sessions, did so only as part of the normal faculty meeting agenda, stretching the time spent in faculty meetings to two hours after a full day of school, when the faculty was exhausted and wanted to go home. In effect, in this way, the administration of the school was perceived as having silenced the teachers' voices.

Presently, most full-time American secondary school teachers work 30 - 40 hours per week on their job and still take correcting and grading home at night. Expecting teachers to remain for meetings, even those that encourage teacher interaction with the purpose of building a sense of solidarity or ownership of curricula, is a great imposition, and one that very few teachers welcome. While some private schools, such as the one

described in Troen's and Boles' study, have the ability to modify teacher's schedules, many schools are limited by state-mandate to providing active educational experiences for a certain number of hours each day. The state of Massachusetts, for example, included "time on learning" as a primary aspect of its school reform in the 1990's (Massachusetts Department of Education, 1999); the State Department of Education required every public school in Massachusetts to provide students with at least six hours of class time on core subjects a day. Early release time for students, which would provide teachers with opportunities to meet to make curricular decisions, is not a possibility in this state. In New Hampshire, no such law exists, but in my own experience, release time was always a highly structured 60 to 90 minutes, during which teachers were expected to attend specific staff development meetings, and were not often given the opportunity to collaborate. The promise of early release time was always met with great cynicism, and the attitude among the teachers with whom I worked was that the administrators didn't trust the teachers to work together productively. Rather than empowering teachers through enabling them to interact, the administration had both kept them apart and fostered a distrust which led to future problems with accepting administrative feedback.

Failure to provide adequate teacher development opportunities

Failing to provide teachers with adequate teacher development is yet another impediment. Many school systems provide teachers with what they feel teachers need, without asking the teachers themselves in much the same way a parent makes decisions for a child. This "top-down" imposition of staff development "betrays a disrespect for teachers' professionalism and the quality of their classroom judgement...Little value is

placed on teachers' own practical knowledge in the development of classroom skills" (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1991, p. 3).

In the case of less commonly taught languages, opportunities for development as an LCTL teacher are extremely difficult to locate. As Leslie Schrier points out in her 1994 article, LCTL teachers often find themselves separated by great distances. This makes it difficult to carry out teacher development in these areas, and even more difficult to promote teacher sharing of ideas (p. 58) Many LCTL teachers can only find teacher development possibilities during the summertime, on their own time, and at their own expense.

One further alarming development among teacher development in LCTLs is the lack of government funding for such opportunities. The Center for Russian Language and Culture, which ran an intensive Russian teacher's workshop at Bryn Mawr College every summer, lost its funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1994, and as a result, this critical opportunity for Russian teachers was lost. In the case of Japanese, summer Japanese language institutes must rely largely on corporate donations; if recessions hit, as they did in the mid-90s, these opportunities disappear. Without funding from external sources, LCTL teachers can neither keep up to date with new language-specific pedagogical information or find strength from interactions with colleagues.

Lack of opportunity for interaction

The most serious repercussion of the loss of these programs has been the subsequent lack of ready opportunities for LCTL teachers to interact. If we accept that interaction with other teachers is a key element to the development of a feeling of

empowerment, then the demise of these intensive programs has aided in the disempowerment of LCTL teachers. LCTL teachers can interact with members of their foreign language faculty on a basic level, as one teacher to another, but unfortunately the culture, sounds, and mind set of the language taught makes the LCTL teacher appear "odd" to non-LCTL colleagues (Schrier, 1994, p. 53) As the LCTL teacher is typically a "singleton" teacher, teaching only one section of each level of the language, his or her schedule is quite full. While non-LCTL teachers may teach more than one section of the same class, providing less preparatory time needed, this situation does not exist for LCTL teachers. When LCTL teachers have "free" time in a school day, they can rarely spend it interacting with other teachers; they need the extra time to prepare for their class load.

While this situation may sound quite grim, it is important to note that certain positive elements have emerged from these impediments. When LCTL teachers do come together, they make the most of their time together, sharing ideas for classroom techniques as well as recruitment. The central focus to the Bryn Mawr program, for example, was as much the creation and development of unique and creative materials as the refinement of language and pedagogical skills. The internet has also united LCTL teachers, both through access to email and through listservs such as that run by Louis Janus of the University of Minnesota.

LCTL teachers have certain qualities that should facilitate their empowerment. As Leslie Schrier says, preservice LCTL teachers typically have received a master's degree, or at least have had extensive study of the lan age they intend to teach, as it takes longer to reach a level of competency suitable to teaching an LCTL than to teach a more commonly taught language (Schrier, 1994, p. 55). They also have the ability to

develop their own curriculum, and their own materials, providing them the complete power to make curriculum decisions.

It is this opportunity to shape curriculum that can prove problematic in LCTL teaching, however. In the case of Russian, for example, a project to develop a national standard for teaching Russian in secondary schools (Edelman, 1997) was begun in the early 1990's but abandoned in 1997 as low enrollments caused the near-extinction of the language in secondary schools. While Russian teachers can create their own curricula, they cannot receive feedback based upon their adherence to a national standard. Without this feedback, it is difficult to feel that curriculum decisions are valid.

Political and bureaucratic impediments

The tendency of American public schools to adhere so closely to national standards and to judge the wealth of a program on the ability of students to compare on some level with students around the country is an issue of bureaucracy and politics. Critical pedagogues are quick to point out the impediment to empowerment posed by politics within schools. Ellsworth notes, however, that "No sustained research attempts to explore whether or how the practices critical pedagogy prescribes actually alter specific power relations outside or inside schools" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 301). She is quick to point out, however, that the reason no definition of empowerment exists is that critical educators need "to come to terms with the essentially paternalistic project of traditional education" (p. 307). A feminist pedagogue, she sees a political educational system that supports "the myth of the ideal rational person and the 'universality of

propositions have been oppressive to those who are not European, White, male, middle class, Christian, able-bodied, thin and heterosexual'" (p. 304).

Involvement in school politics has become paramount in the survival of some language programs. As John Schillinger of the Committee on College and Precollege Russian is quick to point out on his organization's web page, "Until the past two years, data received from responding schools indicated general stability in the number of precollege Russian programs, but also reflected declining enrollments within those programs...The numbers for the 1998-99 academic year continue to follow this trend, but display a new concern: the inevitable loss of school programs because of these declining enrollments." (Schillinger, 1998) Schillinger, who maintains a census of Russian program enrollments, indicates that between 1996 and 1999 the number of students in precollege Russian programs dropped from 10,371 to 4,940. Russian programs on this level, where they are allowed to exist, often feature classes of less than 15 students and often consist of combined - level classes (typically, third, fourth, and fifth year all in the same class).

People responsible for paying taxes that fund schools view this as a waste of money; the Russian teacher with 15 students is being paid the same as a Spanish teacher, for example, with 30. Since the bureaucratic web reaches up from the tax payers to the school board, to the superintendent of schools, to the principal of the school, without support at any one of these levels, LCTL teachers find their programs and their positions threatened. Fighting for their program means fighting for their financial stability. This can be disempowering in that this "battle" goes on in isolation, and, since it is often due largely to a "heartless" issue, can seem to be not worth the fight. Politics can actually

step into the way of effective teaching as a disenheartened teacher's performance can be affected by the materialism of the school board. It is a strong teacher who can stand up to this board and devote his or her attention to teaching in the face of such odds.

Discussion and Suggestions

If empowerment is a state of mind, and if we accept Barksdale-Ladd's idea that empowerment is a process, we should begin shaping our preservice teachers while they are still in teacher education programs to begin this process, and make the state of mind a natural condition. Yonemura's approach, of encouraging student teachers to examine their own knowledge bases via reflection, examining their greatest living resources by interacting with peers, and discovering teaching by interacting with children, is a start. If we accept that the process of empowerment can be started by acquiring knowledge and self-awareness, Yonemura's ideas are entirely reasonable.

Unfortunately, as it has been indicated by the impediments to empowerment, Yonemura's ideas might not be enough to start student teachers toward empowerment. It is not enough to focus on the development of the student teacher as an individual; care must be taken to develop the student teacher as a junior member of a faculty. Beyond simply training preservice teachers to work collaboratively, these future teachers must be prepared to work with fellow faculty members who might not support their new ideas. They must be ready to interact with an administration that might be more concerned with money and numbers than supporting the voice of new teachers.

How can we strengthen the confidence of future teachers so they can feel competent not only to teach but also to deal with potentially devastating personal setbacks and remain positive about teaching as a profession? One idea would for a teacher education class to use realistic case studies dealing with the positive and negative dynamics of teacher interaction in addition to interactions between students and teachers. Working together to examine the situation from different points of view can provide positive solutions to inevitable conflicts before the young teacher actually has to deal with them in an inservice situation. The options such an activity would provide would only build the young teacher's confidence should this occur in the "real world".

Providing student teachers with an understanding of social and political dynamics within a school system is also imperative if the process of empowerment is to be started. As long as public schools are structured as bureaucracies, teachers will have to cut through red tape and cope with political maneuvering requiring them to gain the support of different groups within the bureaucracy when proposing any innovations or changes. It is for this reason I propose student teachers should be exposed to issues more suitable to business classes, especially those dealing with negotiation, and to political science classes, especially those concerning the nature of bureaucracies. With a deeper understanding of the political structure of schools, preservice teachers can be encouraged to use proper channels to get their ideas heard.

Second language teachers in training can be started on the road to empowerment prior to their actual inservice experience in several ways. They need to be reminded of the uniqueness of their subject; they are representing a new culture to their students,

which is not an easy task when dealing with traditionally single-minded egotistical secondary school students.

Second language teachers in training should have travel to another country where their second language is spoken be a mandatory aspect of their teacher education program. Ideally the preservice second language teacher should have a home stay experience, both to build everyday language skills that will be of so much benefit to their students and to obtain current cultural information about everyday life. While many preservice second language teachers have studied abroad in a country where their second language is spoken, going abroad with the intention of gaining information to be used in a future language class provides the student teacher with goals that go beyond a those of a college junior, for example, on a semester abroad program. As foreign language teachers are often teaching a language that is not their native language, the educational trip will further build their confidence in their control of the language.

Finally, for second language teachers, a class in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) or in technology applications for educators should be mandatory. Knowledge of such computer resources as the World Wide Web (especially of language specific web sites), email, listservs, and MUD (multi-user domains) and MOO (multi-user object-oriented) environments can unite teachers across thousands of miles and combat isolation.

These ideas are particularly pertinent for teachers of less commonly taught languages. LCTL teachers, however, could also benefit from any course that encourages extroversion or the development of assertiveness. This is, of course, easier said than done. At the very least it proposes a personality change! At its greatest extent, it can fly

in the face of a native speaking LCTL teacher's culture. If classroom teaching can be viewed as a performing art, perhaps some cues can be taken from acting, public speaking or drama classes.

The modifications proposed here are intended only as ideas to supplement existing teacher education programs. We cannot expect that preservice teachers in teacher education programs can emerge from such programs entirely empowered. True feelings of empowerment come with experience. We can, however, instill in them the desire to become "responsible teachers", as Suleiman put it, and, in doing so, help them to develop "responsible students."

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